

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes July 16, 2010

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, July 16, 2010, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Halverson, Porter, Smitten, Wencil, Young; and Messrs. Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Merrigan, *Thao, *Wang, and Messrs. *Alton, *Commers, *Schertler.
*Excused

Also Present: Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works; Lucy Thompson, Patricia James, Christina Morrison, Sarah Zorn, Josh Williams, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes July 2, 2010.

MOTION: *Commissioner Nelson moved approval of the minutes of July 2, 2010. Commissioner Wickiser seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Donnelly-Cohen announced that the date for the first meeting of the Transportation Committee will be Monday, August 16, 2010. At that meeting the committee meeting schedule will be decided.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond reported that the City Council held a public hearing on the District del Sol Zoning Study. Councilmember Thune wanted to reconsider the Planning Commission's recommended rezoning for five (5) parcels from RM1 (residential) to TN2 (traditional neighborhood). So this has been laid over to July 21, 2010 to continue the public hearing.

The District 9 Plan Area Plan Summary was approved at City Council on July 7, 2010, with an amendment by Councilmember Thune to add language recommending a zoning study for two areas on either side of West 7th Street.

On May 12th the City Council passed a resolution of intent to establish a moratorium on businesses known as hookah lounges. These are essentially tobacco shops that offer sampling of tobacco products, which is permitted under the state clean air act. The interim ordinance establishing the moratorium is not through City Council yet, but under state law the City Council

can pass a resolution of intent to establish an interim ordinance that goes into affect as soon as the resolution is passed, which was in May. The City has until May of 2011 to do the zoning study and approve new regulations.

Finally, the Planning Commission received a notice of a community meeting about the Smith Avenue Revitalization Initiative on Tuesday, July 27th and all commissioners are welcome to attend.

IV. Zoning Committee

SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. (*Tom Beach, 651/266-9086*)

One item to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, July 20, 2010. East Metro Behavioral Health Crisis Center at 414 University Avenue East for a new building.

NEW BUSINESS

#10-511-437 Theodore Kvasnik – Rezoning from B2 Community Business to TN2 Traditional Neighborhood. 2180-2186 Marshall Avenue, SW corner at Cretin.
(*Josh Williams, 651/266-6659*)

MOTION: *Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

#10-509-684 A & A Quality Food Fuel – Conditional Use Permit to reconstruct an auto convenience store, with modification of required buffer area. 1200 White Bear Avenue N, SE corner at Maryland Avenue. (*Anton Jerve, 651/266-6567*)

Commissioner Kramer reported that this case has been laid over to an undetermined date.

#10-506-183 Sandra Belisle – Change of nonconforming use to add pet day care and boarding to existing pet grooming business. 360 Clifton Street, SE corner at Jefferson.
(*Patricia James, 651/266-6639*)

Commissioner Kramer reported that this case has been laid over to an undetermined date.

Commissioner Kramer announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, July 22, 2010.

V. Red Rock Corridor Station Area Planning; Lower Afton Station Area Concept Briefing – Presentation by Thomas Dobbs, Hay Dobbs, and Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County.

Christina Morrison, PED staff said that she and Allen Lovejoy have been participating in the Red Rock Commuter Rail Corridor Station Area Planning. Mr. Andy Gritzlaff, Washington County and Mr. Thomas Dobbs from Hay/Dobbs were present to give an update on the process.

Andy Gritzlaff is a transportation planner for Washington County and project manager for the Red Rock Corridor. He gave an overview and noted that the Red Rock Corridor is a significant transportation route for several modes and the significant population centers in the southeast

metro area. The Red Rock Corridor Commission was formed in 1998, which is a joint powers board of regional rail authorities. Mr. Gritzlaff highlighted some of the work that's been done to date on this corridor. The idea of commuter rail in the metro started in 1997 when MnDOT completed its commuter rail feasibility study, which showed a series of commuter lines radiating from downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis. In 2001 the Red Rock Corridor Commission conducted their own feasibility study, and it showed the proposed rail alignment for commuter rail as well as the station stops. The Lower Afton facility was cited as a potential commuter rail stop, and commuter rail was identified as the best option due to the presence of the original railroad infrastructure. Commuter rail was also identified as the long-term vision from the Alternatives Analysis. Currently, the bus ridership is not enough to justify the bigger investment in rail.

Red Rock is a shared corridor with the proposed high speed rail alignment between the Twin Cities and Chicago, and existing freight operations, so improvements to infrastructure could provide multiple benefits in this corridor. The proposed schedule would enable commuter rail service to Union Depot at about 2019, with an extension to Minneapolis in 2022.

Mr. Thomas Dobbs gave an overview of the 18-month timeline and extensive project consultant team for the station area planning. The stations are Lower Afton, Newport, Cottage Grove and Hastings, and the analysis covers current conditions, transportation networks, and redevelopment opportunities, the platforms and station systems, traffic access to the stations, parking needs, and market conditions.

Mr. Dobbs noted that they are about halfway through the planning project, and they have already hosted several focused community meetings. The broader community supports the idea of having additional transit options; however, some neighbors have concerns with the proposal. The Lower Afton site is off Highway 61 and the station area is one-fourth (1/4) mile to one-half (1/2) mile around the existing park and ride. Mr. Dobbs discussed the environmental review to identify impacts to environmental features, and some early review has been done in the ecologically sensitive areas looking at the protected invertebrate and vertebrate species.

Transportation impacts are being addressed at the potential park and ride site, on roadways in study area, and on pathways to and from the station platform. The team is coordinating with MnDOT to analyze traffic demand versus roadway capacity and identify areas of concern. Lower Afton will not have an extensive market research done because there is not potential for significant redevelopment or transit oriented development uses. The Lower Afton station area is planned only as a parking facility with suitable amenities for passengers.

Met Council projects populations in the southeast portion of Red Rock Corridor will increase 55,000 by 2030, or 100,000 new residences by 2030 in the broader corridor. Mr. Dobbs showed some precedent images of the type of station Lower Afton would be, keeping in the natural features and character that exists there.

Commissioner Spaulding said that the Battle Creek Trail runs along side the station on the west side of Hwy 61. How would that connect into the station?

Mr. Dobbs explained that the trail that runs along Hwy 61 goes underneath Hwy 61 at Battle Creek Park entry, then it is on the east side and comes down to Point Douglas Road. The ramp is oriented to the east that would be the primary face, which is where there would be shuttle bus service, auto access, pedestrians, and bikes at that location.

Commissioner Connolly asked what the current budget is for the whole line and where it is in the timeline.

Andy Gitzlaff said with respect to what is being worked on now, the study is being done with a Federal New Starts Grant, which is 80% federal and 20% local. As far as improvements, they have not gotten to the point where they have entered the formal New Starts process for capital funding.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, asked if they could talk more about the connection from Union Depot to Minneapolis, how that is going to be studied, and how it will tie into Red Rock.

Mr. Gitzlaff said the project has two phases, the segment to the Union Depot, and a second phase that will follow a northern (Burlington Northern Santa Fe) or southern (Canadian Pacific) rail alignment into Minneapolis. Both lines converge around the University of Minnesota then meet Northstar at the Twins stadium. The extent of their study so far has been to identify that there are two routes and the potential cost to make those connections. The Department of Transportation is working on a State Transportation Plan for inter-city rail, which is city-to-city connection. This would be another connection/addition to Central Corridor, which would be somewhere around a 20 minute headway between the two downtowns.

Both these alignments would go through the Union Depot. The southern alignment would actually pull right into the tracks, stop and then continue out. The northern alignment would back out of the depot and come up and around, which adds time. Mr. Gitzlaff noted that from Hastings to the depot it is about ½ hour and another ½ hour for that connection to Minneapolis.

Ms. Drummond asked if that would be the connection used by high speed rail from Chicago.

Mr. Gitzlaff said yes and right now the DOT is looking at a high speed connection from Twin Cities to Chicago, including going to the Union Depot and a terminus in Minneapolis. The DOT is seeking some federal funds through a TIGER grant to study those two connections.

VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee

None.

VII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Proposed Amendments to Fitzgerald Park Precinct Plan Area Plan Summary – Recommend approval of the proposed amendments and forward to the City Council for final adoption, subject to Metropolitan Council review and approval. (Lucy Thompson, 651/266-6578)

Commissioner Wencil announced that they received two letters as part of the public comment period.

MOTION: Commissioner Wencil moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to approve the amendments to Fitzgerald Park Precinct Plan Area Plan Summary and forward to the City Council for final adoption of the summary subject to the Metropolitan Council review and approval. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Wencil announced that the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting has been canceled.

VIII. Communications Committee

Commissioner Smitten had no report.

IX. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Smitten announced that on Tuesday evening, July 27th there will be a community meeting regarding the Smith Avenue Revitalization work that's been underway. The meeting is from 6 - 7:30 p.m. at the Thompson Senior Center, in West Saint Paul. The Smith Avenue Task Force has been very busy. She invited all commissioners to come and find out just how busy.

Commissioner Kramer reported that the Phalen/Keller Regional Park Planning Task Force completed their work last night and they have master plan amendments for Phalen and Keller Regional Parks, which will go to the Parks Commission for adoption. The Planning Commission Steering Committee had talked about at some point having a briefing from Parks staff about this and several other parks planning efforts, including Mounds Park Plan and Great River Park Plan. So at a future meeting there might be an update on all the major park planning efforts.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,



Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved July 30, 2010
(Date)

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission